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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on
Tuesday, 23 March 1993, at 3.25 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil)

- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome members to this resumed organizational session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. As this is the first formal meeting of the Disarmament Commission under my chairmanship, I should like to express my sincere thanks to all members for the confidence they expressed in me and for the honour they conferred upon me and my country by electing me as Chairman of the Commission for 1993. I am sure I will be able to count on the continued cooperation of all delegations as well as on the expert support of the Office of Disarmament Affairs in seeking to carry out the tasks entrusted to the Disarmament Commission.

As members will recall, at the first part of the Commission's organizational session, which was held on 8 December 1992, we considered a number of organizational matters and adopted decisions on questions related to the election of the Chairman and other officers, the provisional agenda of the Commission and the establishment of subsidiary bodies for the 1993 substantive session as well as its date and duration. Those decisions are reflected in the verbatim record of that meeting (A/CN.10/PV.171).

It will also be recalled that the Commission was not able at that meeting to finalize the consideration of all organizational matters for the 1993 session. Three questions were left pending for decision at a resumed organizational session: first, completion of the election of officers for the 1993 session; secondly, appointment of the chairmen of the Working Groups; and, thirdly, the question of an additional substantive agenda item for 1993.

(The Chairman)

Today, as a result of consultations conducted during the past months, we are in a position to take up some of those pending questions. The decisions we may take today are important in view of the relatively short time available for pre-session preparations and consultations on the subjects to be considered at the 1993 substantive session of the Commission, which, as members know, is scheduled to take place from 19 April to 10 May.

(The Chairman)

Before we take up those issues for action, I wish to draw attention to the draft resolution (A/C.1/47/L.56) adopted earlier this month by the First Committee at the resumed session which was held, in accordance with General Assembly decision 47/422, for the purpose of reassessing the multilateral arms control and disarmament machinery, in particular the respective roles of the First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament and their interrelationship, as well as the role of the Office of Disarmament Affairs.

Operative paragraphs 3, 4 and 8 of that resolution, which have direct relevance to the work of the Disarmament Commission, read as follows:

"3. Reaffirms the role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery, and takes note of the progress achieved in its ongoing process of reform;

"4. Recommends that every effort be made to continue to enhance the working methods of the United Nations Disarmament Commission so as to enable it to give focused consideration to a limited number of priority issues in the field of disarmament, and to that end welcomes the decision of the Commission to move its agenda towards a three-item phased approach;

"8. Stresses the importance of further enhancing the dialogue and cooperation among the First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament".

Before we proceed to consider each of the three pending questions before us - that is, completion of the election of officers for the 1993 session; the appointment of the Chairmen of the Working Groups; and the question of the

(The Chairman)

inclusion of an additional substantive item on the agenda for 1993 - does any delegation wish to make any comments of a general nature?

If not, we will proceed to complete the election of the members of the Bureau of the Commission for 1993. As representatives will recall, at the meeting held on 8 December last year the Commission elected its Chairman for 1993, as well as seven of its eight Vice-Chairmen - Benin, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Ireland, Mauritius, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea - and its Rapporteur, Mr. Stefan Füle of the Czech Republic.

The election of a second Vice-Chairman from the Group of Western European and Other States was left pending. I have been informed by the current Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States, the representative of Ireland, that the Group has decided to nominate Canada to this second vice-chairmanship.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to elect Canada as Vice-Chairman of the Commission for 1993.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to congratulate the delegation of Canada on its election as Vice-Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

I now turn to the question of the appointment of the Chairmen of the Working Groups of the Commission.

As representatives may recall, at its organizational meeting on 8 December 1992 the Disarmament Commission established three Working Groups, one for each of the three substantive items already included on its agenda for 1993: Working Group 1 on nuclear disarmament; Working Group II on regional approach to disarmament; and Working Group III on the role of science and technology.

(The Chairman)

The Commission decided that the item entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" would be held over for conclusion in 1994. A limited number of meetings of the Working Group on nuclear disarmament would be held during the 1993 substantive session. Working papers may be submitted and the Chairmen of the Working Group may conduct informal consultations at any time prior to the 1994 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, when he is expected to bring the consideration of the item to a conclusion.

The Commission also decided that it should conclude at its 1993 substantive session the consideration of the agenda items entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security" and "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields".

Without prejudice to the decision still to be taken by the Commission on whether to include on its agenda an additional substantive item, a decision that could entail the establishment of a fourth Working Group, the Commission may now wish to appoint the Chairmen of Working Groups I, II and III.

In this connection, I would draw the attention of the members of the Commission to paragraph 4 (1) of the document on "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission" (A/CN.10/137), according to which the allocation of the agenda items to the subsidiary bodies of the Commission and the appointment of the Chairmen of these subsidiary bodies should be decided at the organizational session of the Commission, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

I am pleased to report that as a result of consultations between and within the different regional groups the arrangements for the chairmanship of

(The Chairman)

these three Working Groups will be as follows: first, Ambassador Victor H. Batiouk of Ukraine will chair Working Group I on "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons"; secondly, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany will chair Working Group II on "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security"; and, thirdly, Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun of Mongolia will chair Working Group III on "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields".

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees with these appointments.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I congratulate Ambassador Batiouk, Ambassador Hoffmann and Ambassador Erdenechuluun on their appointment as Chairmen of, respectively, Working Groups I, II and III of the Disarmament Commission. I look forward to the opportunity of working closely with them, and I wish to assure each of them of my readiness to cooperate fully with them in the exercise of their mandates as they begin the task of preparing for the substantive work of their respective Working Groups.

Having had the experience of chairing one of the Working Groups of the Disarmament Commission, I would recommend that the newly-appointed Chairmen begin as soon as possible a process of informal consultations on their respective agenda items. This is particularly the case in relation to Working Groups II and III, which are expected to conclude their work during the forthcoming substantive session of the Commission scheduled from 19 April to 10 May.

(The Chairman)

With a view to continuing the process of preparation for the substantive session, it is my intention to convene a meeting of the expanded Bureau of the Commission, with the participation of the Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur and the Chairmen of the three Working Groups. The date of this meeting, which will be held quite soon, will be announced in the Journal of the United Nations.

In paragraph 8 (b) (iii) of resolution 47/54 A, the General Assembly requested the Disarmament Commission to consider at its organizational session whether one new item should be included on the substantive agenda of the Disarmament Commission for 1993. In the third preambular paragraph of the same resolution, the Assembly noted the support for the proposal to include on the agenda an item entitled "General guidelines for non-proliferation, with special emphasis on weapons of mass destruction".

(The Chairman)

At the meeting held on 8 December 1992 it was felt that the Commission was not yet in a position to take a decision on this question, and the matter was left pending. As representatives are aware, I have been conducting informal consultations with a view to exploring the possibilities of reaching an agreement on this issue. Unfortunately, I have to inform members of the Commission that the differences of opinion still persist. From my assessment of the situation, I think it would be advisable to continue the consultations and to defer a decision on the question of the inclusion of a new item to another organizational meeting. That meeting could be held during the week prior to the opening of the 1993 substantive session of the Commission on 19 April.

If we do decide to include a new substantive item in our 1993 agenda, we shall then also have to take appropriate decisions on the establishment of a working group and on the appointment of its chairman.

The final organizational meeting before the opening of the 1993 substantive session - which, as I have mentioned, would presumably be held during the week prior to the opening of the substantive session - would also take the necessary decisions on the programme of work of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies.

Are there any comments on the suggestion that we defer the decision on the question of the inclusion of the new item on the substantive agenda to another resumed organizational meeting, to be held during the week of 12 April?

Mr. RYDBERG (Sweden): The Swedish delegation continues to support your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to proceed with consultations on the outstanding issue of the inclusion of an additional item on the agenda for the 1993 session of the Disarmament Commission.

(Mr. Rydberg, Sweden)

My delegation's preference has been for the inclusion as soon as possible of an agenda item, however phrased, on non-proliferation, with particular emphasis on weapons of mass destruction. A consensus-oriented approach to this topic would, in our opinion, be a valuable complement to the ongoing dialogue on non-proliferation issues in other forums, such as the Conference on Disarmament. We would be happy to see you continue your consultations, Mr. Chairman, with that option in mind.

Given the need for proper preparation for the discussions in the Disarmament Commission, we would also suggest, Mr. Chairman, that you consider the possibility of holding the consultations on the basis that this year's agenda would include only the item mentioned in operative paragraph 7 of General Asssembly resolution 47/54 A, on the understanding that at our organizational meeting in December we would decide to include in the agenda the items mentioned in the third and fourth paragraphs of the preamble to that resolution.

Miss CABALLERO (Colombia)(interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the delegation of Colombia, I express our thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, for the efforts you have made to reach a consensus approach to the Disarmament Commission's agenda.

I have little to add to what has just been said by the representative of Sweden. I wish merely to support what he has said.

I would emphasize that, despite the fact that so far this year we have not reached a consensus approach to the adoption of the Commission's agenda, my delegation believes that it is urgent, indeed vital, to include the two items in question in the agenda - if not this year, then at least next year.

My delegation believes that it is not simply a question of which items should be included in the agenda, but of strengthening the Disarmament

(Miss Caballero, Colombia)

Commission's agenda. I believe that there is consensus on the idea that if we do not include a new item in the agenda, we shall not get a balanced agenda of three items. And, although there is no consensus on the inclusion of the item, there is consensus on the need to strengthen the Disarmament Commission's programme of work and make it more effective. Hence, it is obvious that the only way to achieve this is to include a new item this year.

My delegation understands the difficulties this entails for some delegations, and we can only regret this. But once again we would urge delegations to consider the possibility of including a new item simply in order to achieve a balanced agenda of three items.

Finally, my delegation hopes that if the two items mentioned in, respectively, the third and fourth paragraphs of the preamble to resolution 47/54 A are not included in the agenda this year, they will be included next year. We believe that both items are of tremendous interest to delegations and could offer the opportunity of doing some effective work within the Disarmament Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: All the members of the Commission have heard the suggestion made by the representative of Sweden and commented upon by the representative of Colombia.

The representative of Sweden expressed a preference for the inclusion as soon as possible of an item on the question of non-proliferation, however phrased; but he also suggested that if it were not possible to reach agreement on the inclusion of such an item in the substantive agenda for the 1993 session, we could consider at our organizational meeting towards the end of this year - normally it is held at the beginning of December - the idea of including in the provisional agenda for 1994 the two items referred to in,

(The Chairman)

respectively, the third and fourth paragraphs of the preamble to resolution 47/54 A. As members will recall, the third preambular paragraph refers to the question of non-proliferation and the fourth preambular paragraph refers to the question entitled "International arms transfers, with particular reference to resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991".

I also understand that the representative of Sweden did not propose that we take a decision on this matter today, but I think we could bear his suggestion in mind when we hold our final resumed organizational meeting during the week before 19 April. One possibility would be simply to include the item in the agenda; the other possibility would be not to take a decision to that effect but to take this element into consideration when, during our resumed organizational meeting, we take decisions on questions related to the Disarmament Commission's agenda for 1993, and eventually 1994.

I would not propose or suggest that we take any kind of decision on this matter now or prejudge positions that delegations may wish to express on it later - on the understanding that we shall have another resumed organizational meeting during the week of 12 April to take decisions on the question of the agenda and on the question of the programme of work for our April-May session.

May I take it that that is acceptable to members of the Commission?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The date of the next plenary meeting of the Disarmament Commission will be announced in the Journal.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.